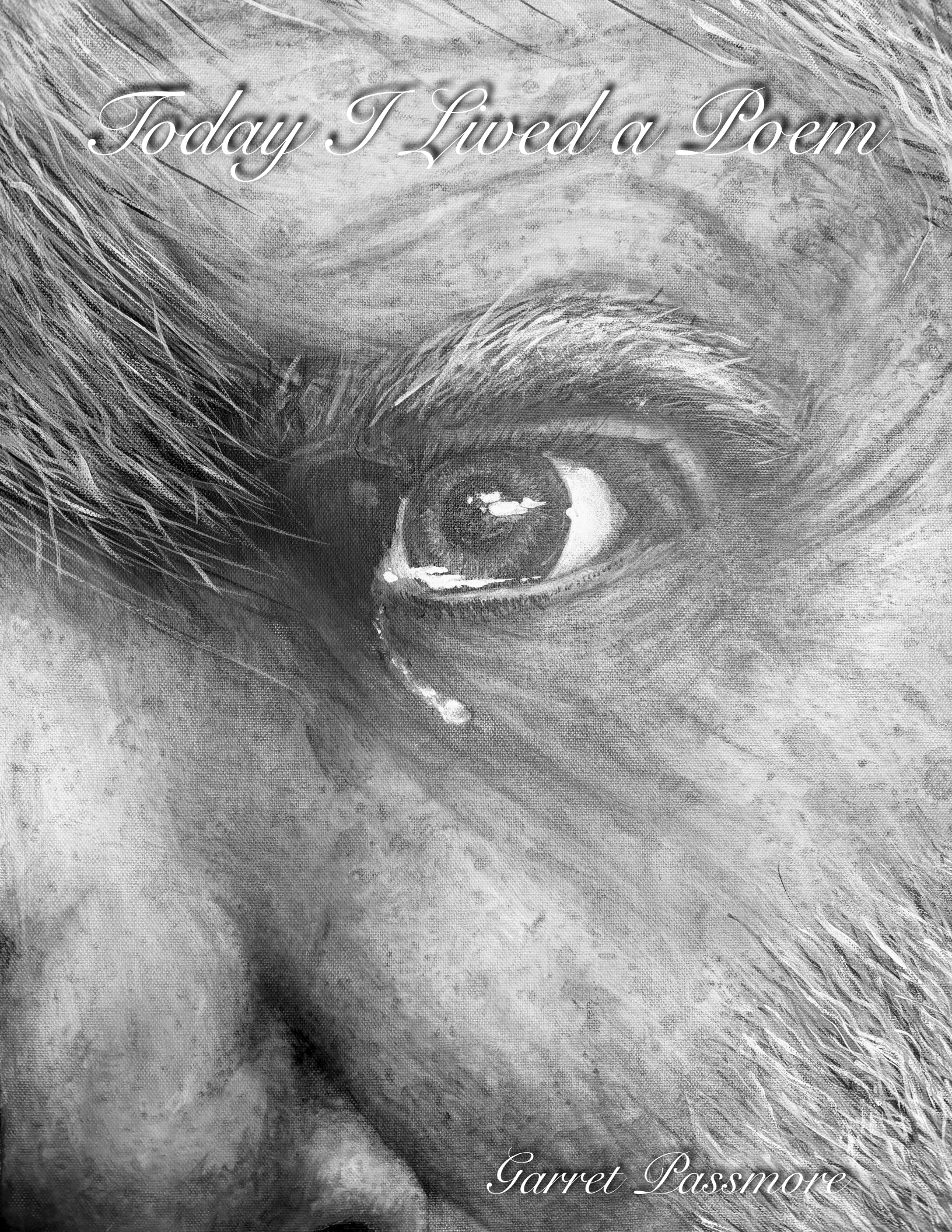
Today I Lived a Poem



Garret Passmore

An Introduction to This Book Cover and Book

Poetry has a background. There is always a story behind what is being said. To illustrate this concept, I will present the story behind a poem that inspired the cover of this book. While reading the book of Genesis, I noticed something interesting about Reuben that I had not considered before.

I had taken many notes from Genesis and decided to write a poem around the theme of this one character. I felt his story related to many people in our modern world. Reuben's story casts a type or shadow still relevant to our human experience. In other words, the backdrop may change, but the play remains the same. The concept behind this book cover is the pain each of us feels for falling short of what we should be, and the sorrow that follows.

I take liberties in filling the gaps of my poems with words and ideas of my own. The poem presented here carries a message. The overarching thought of the following poem is, "Let not my goodness fail because of sin," drawn from my reflection on the life of Reuben. The first line is simply an observation that the civilization in which I live has some familiarity with the Bible. The second and third lines are based on Deuteronomy 4:29–31, which reminds us to seek God with our whole heart. The fourth line uses the phrase "Eleloh Israel," meaning "The Mighty God of Israel," as found in Genesis 33:20. Line five is my own realization.

For line six, it helps to keep in mind that Jacob is also known as Israel. Jacob also means "Supplanter," defined as one who takes the place of another through deception, scheming, or strategy — a fitting reminder of how Jacob came to his place in history. Line seven reminds us that our children carry our name and honor. We rise or fall by the strength or weakness of their character.

Line eight comes from Genesis 35:23, which establishes that Reuben was Jacob's firstborn and therefore a leader whom younger siblings might follow — as reflected in lines nine and ten. Line eleven draws from Genesis 37:11, which states, "His brothers envied him," while line twelve is based on Genesis 35:24, noting that Joseph was the eldest son of Jacob's second wife, Rachel. Line thirteen comes from Genesis 37:20, revealing that his own brothers plotted to kill him. The remainder of Genesis 37 tells how Reuben intervened on Joseph's behalf, though not quickly enough to prevent him from being sold into Egypt. Genesis 42:22 offers further evidence that Reuben genuinely cared for Joseph, even though Joseph was only his half-brother.

Despite being a genuinely caring person, Reuben suffered great losses in exchange for a small and fleeting pleasure — sleeping with his father's concubine. Jacob pronounced a curse over his son in Genesis 49:4: "You will no longer excel, for you went in to my bed and defiled it." First Chronicles 5:1 further confirms that the rights of the firstborn were stripped from Reuben. What follows is the poem drawn from these scriptures — the poem that, in turn, inspired the cover of this book.

Reuben

Familiar is the Word of God
Let Thy Word reside in my heart
And abide forever
Eleloh Israel, may I learn to eternally obey
I need Thy constant care
The man of God, Jacob, raised sons to be as he
Lasting pillars of the Lord
No son was older than Reuben
Beloved leader was he
Overseer of his father's will
Envy in his brother's hearts
The oldest son of Rachel stood in danger
"**C**ome, let us slay him"
Mighty Reuben delivered him out of their hands
And intended to return him to his father
Yet when Reuben returned, Joseph was gone
Upset, he rent his clothes
Guilt over his failure to protect his brother
Sackcloth upon his heart
Oh, tears of joy when Reuben found his brother
Egypt had enlarged Reuben's brother
Oh, that the fat of Egypt was enough!
Oh, that strength and might were preserved!
Dignity and power of the beginning time
Failed with the wanting of the flesh
Never a rock, but as wind-tossed water was Reuben
Seducing Bilhah the concubine
Every day—now a struggle
In giving way to the carnal mind
Sadness alone can never correct
No more will Reuben excel
Struggle to keep the Lord's commandments—therefore I must

Today I Lived a Poem.

Horace Mann was born in 1796. He grew up to say, “Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity.” He later died in 1859. One-hundred years later I was born. I grew up and had five children. They are all good people who leave things better than they find them. They are my victories. This book is dedicated to everyone who has touched my life and influenced me. Is that not everybody, to one degree or another?

What a beautiful and horrible thing life is. Most of all, life seems to me a contradiction. It is hard to figure out. I am constantly puzzled and constantly amazed. One example is my love for poems and old prose. Most people don’t like them. I don’t know why. I think them clever things—beautiful things! Like people there are all sorts: long ones, short ones, good ones, bad ones, clever ones, stupid ones, deep ones, shallow ones. There are also all sorts of styles. Some styles are very disciplined while others are free spirited and don’t seem to fit in with what people think should be. Poems and old prose are just like people because they reflect the people who wrote them.

These are some of the poems and old prose I have collected and written over the years. Some of what I have written down has been lost. Those that I have decided to include have some sort of back story which I will tell you about in this book. Well,…you will at least get part of the story.

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This first set of poems is drawn from the words and lines in a book called ***Poems That Touch The Heart***, first compiled by A. L. Alexander in 1941. While reading, I noted lines and phrases that moved me, then noticed several shared common themes. I grouped these by theme and used each group as the raw material for an entirely new poem.

The following are these different created poems with an accompanying background explanation.

I look forward to death and yet dread it. I long for rest from life's vale of miserable tears yet, have I done all that I should have done? That is the dread. Have I made those around me better or, have I made things worse? I fear my poor decisions and times of craziness. My contradictions have given me much to reflect on.

The Swiftness of Life by Garret Passmore

Another year has gone.
Life's a swift and terrible race!
Yesterday is but a dream,
And tomorrow is only a vision.

Everything is the same.
It never really changes.
I plod slowly down that long, lone path
Afire with summer's beam, yet autumn it seems.

Confront yourself and look you in the eye
Noon will soon pale, shadows then,
Next a night of rain and hail.
Muse the awful news that season must follow season.

I feel God in all that I am and in all that is. He is the beautiful poem woven through my life — one that has given me courage when I needed it most and a reason to keep trying. I believe that sincere trying may be the truest thing a person can offer, for I often fall short of what a child of God should be. My deepest hope is that my striving is genuine — that I am becoming someone God would be proud of rather than embarrassed by. I remember how my father used to tell me he was proud of me, and how those words filled me. I want to know that from God too: to be, in the fullest sense, a beloved son.

God by Garret Passmore

By worshipful listening I see God's anvil shape my life.
He gives me love and strength and courage for the strife.
Someone walks beside me, invisible, making life more clear,
Reminding me that poverty and riches are measured here — in Spirit.

I will not doubt, though all my prayers return unanswered.
I will not heed the skeptic's call — their doubt, a clever lie.
For ages now the skeptic's blows have beaten hard upon it;
Yet the anvil remains unharmed — the hammers are all gone.

I choose to find tongues in trees,
Books in running brooks and sermons in the stones,
And wonder in every ordinary thing,
Turning from the darkened sight, the cynic's beam.

In the temple of my purest thoughts dwells the sacred God,
Who has bestowed unspeakable gifts upon this life —
Embracing birth, accepting death, counting every blessing,
And meeting all of it, at last, with gratitude.

In grade school we had a recovering alcoholic talk about his experiences. He was dressed like a blue-collar worker and was in his late 30s at the time. One story that stuck with me occurred in the winter. This man went out to his wood pile for their wood stove. His young son accompanied him. As he looked back at his son's progress through the snow he noticed his son was doing his best to step into the tracks he made. At that moment he had an epiphany. He knew he had to change or his son would end up making the same mistakes he had made.

I had steady wonderful parents. At the time I didn't realize how lucky I was. I was never spanked by my mother. Dad only spanked me three times. The first time he spanked me is when I called him a "Firetrucker" and then repeated the insult after refusing to apologize. The next time was for disobedience that resulted in myself getting injured. I thought the spanking was so unfair because I had already been injured. The third time was for injuring my brother. There were other times that I deserved a spanking for doing things just as bad or worse but I got away with them. There was one time Dad threatened me for throwing rocks at the neighbor kids so I stopped.

My mother was an example of service, and my Dad was an example of honesty and of rescuing people in need. I felt I fell short of all the good my parents were. When I became a parent I was scared of the task and inexperience led to mistakes I am not proud of. But if how your children turn out is any indication of your parenting skills I must have been better than I thought I was. The whole family has great relationships with each other and the children grew up to be responsible adults and good parents. I am blessed beyond what I deserve.

Being a Parent by Garret Passmore

A little joy has become part of my life.
I think back to when I was a boy.
A drunkard in penitence told of his epiphany;
His own boy stepping in his snow prints to follow him.

Deep has that lesson stayed with me in spite of toil and business life.
A little fellow follows me; I do not dare to go astray,
For fear he'll go to the selfsame way.
It makes me think, a careful man I need to be.

Tomorrow comes—tomorrow goes,
Useless tears for yesterday's pain,
Do not erase my past mistakes.
Then let me speak thoughtfully today.

All bear the promise of becoming the children of God.
Therefore I should show bravery in peril,
Constancy in tribulation, temperance in wrath,
And speak the language of the heart's path

Everyone has had their day ruined by someone else's bad mood. People's attitudes have a domino effect — one thing leads to another until the whole world feels the backlash. This sounds like an exaggeration. I'm not so sure it is.

The Underbelly of Humans by Garret Passmore

Faithless people go their way with seething, scheming brains
Soul-blind, refusing to see, mean as they can be.
They spread depression where they can,
With dismal tales of woe, doubt, and fear.

Their anger brings anguish, brawling, and senseless strife
How sharp—how cruel humans seem to be!
I have cried out, “The world is inhuman, can't you see!”
I wish they could see, or at least let-me-be.

We all have problems and shortcomings that we must try to overcome. One way we can grow is by getting married. What a stretch it is to truly unite your life with another's. Marriage gives us the opportunity to learn to be kinder, gentler, more giving, more patient and tolerant. When you have children together you must double your efforts in becoming a better person. We are slow learners but marriage and family have the possibility of becoming a fast track to becoming better than we are. Marriage and family can be the gateway to discovering what love truly is.

My Wife by Garret Passmore

A woman’s hand buckles on your armor in the morning,
Soothes your fatigue and wounds at night.
She is the bridge over the canyon wide,
The heart to share, the desire to bear, the will to lift.

All my efforts are nothing without my spouse.
All work is empty save when there is love.
A life made rich without my even thinking.
With her, the work is love made visible.

Her whispered word of love; a hymn.
With her there is joy in every condition.
Because of her there is more rose to living.
Friends may fail or fade away, yet I have her by my side.

We have all walked through difficult times during our lifetime. Often our difficult circumstances are semi-infinite. That is, they surround us no matter which direction we walk. We don't know when, if ever, we will be clear of them.

Difficulties by Garret Passmore

I have known the silence of the stars when
I have drunk the dregs of sadness to the end.
I have known the silence of the Sea when
I have had wet hot tears and tasted of their salt.

I have been face to face with trouble,
The doubts and useless struggles
Long I roamed through weary crowds.
Difficulties were a stumbling block, seldom a stepping stone.

Gone is the city, gone the day,
Yet still the story and the meaning stay.
To grow, means to suffer and suffer I do.
Whatever Is, Is best and likely I deserve it too.

Yet, I would rather feel the sting of strife,
Than to settle down to useless life.
If I should fill, at last, a well-earned grave,
Why should I lament life's thorny rose?

If each sorrow has its purpose then,
Seeming evil brings to pass good to me.
I should then hold the rose's beauty,
As a shield against thorny despair.

Perhaps I should think of happy things,
Not the things that can make me cry.
Think of the days alive with sunshine,
Rather than dismal days of rain and whine.

If any little word can make life brighter;
If any little song can make the heart a little lighter;
God help us to speak that little word,
Sing that little song.

I shall believe that in the heights for which I strive,
Are only reached by anguish and by pain;
I will yet see, through severest losses, the greater gain.
Walking to the gates of a better day, sown in tears and reaped in joy.

To piggy back off of the last poem, which was created with the words and lines of many poems, here is one I left whole with the same type of theme. I entitled this one simply as “Poem.”

Poem by unknown author

Take yesterday’s worries and sort them all out
And you'll wonder whatever you worried about.
Look back, at the cares that once furrowed your brow,
I fancy you'll smile at most of them now.
They seemed terrible then, but they really were not,
For once out of the woods, all the fears are forgot.

We all need each other. We are social animals and exist as one. We rise or fall together. I often ask, “How are you doing?” I have been told once or twice before, “You really don’t care.” I beg to differ. I really do care. I care a great deal. If you are having a great day I will have a better day because of it. If you are happy it will show in your attitude towards me. But, if you are having a bad day that attitude will find its way to me and I will have a worse day because of you. Your happiness is my happiness, and your misery is my misery. I really do love you and wish the best for you. Why? Because that is what I want and I can’t fully get it unless you do too.

Empathy by Garret Passmore

Do you have empathy for a fellow?
Warmer greetings, sadder sighs?
Be as sweet as summer rain,
Have understanding for their pain.

In helping toiling neighbors and friends alike,
Cultivate an educated heart, grow some thoughtful eyes.
Have tolerance that sometimes comes only with age,
Empathize with the innermost heart, the unturned page.

You may have been educated with a library of books,
But what is knowledge worth without knowing how to grieve?
Without understanding the sacred scenes of death and birth?
Without being able to build a bridge of faith between your life and mine?

People are apt to find fault when it's better to praise and give relief.
Some turn a deaf ear to the silence of the defeated,
Some lips speak with scorn to those who hide unspeakable pain.
Although you would be right, you would also be wrong.

You fear that to feel is to hurt; you never liked playing in the dirt.
The more one feels the more they suffer, and you like to be buffered.
But if you want to feel beauty you must also be willing to have its lack.
Since hurt is the price of larger living, do not escape or hate another's pain.

I think if we were always glad we scarcely could be tender.
Meet life bravely, bear it proudly; tragedy tests human worth.
Some will weep, so speak kind words in sympathetic song.
Know this: even though we cry, we laugh together too.

Some people accomplish much good. From others, little good comes at all. We all want to make a difference, and we do. The only question to ask is, “Which direction?” You have to first decide and then work towards it. At first, the path will seem hard, but it becomes easier the more practiced we are.

Accomplishment by Garret Passmore

Fumble, stumble, risk a tumble,
Make a start, however humble!
People who have risen, great deeds to do,
Begin their life with no more than you.

Win a worthwhile battle,
Over selfishness and spite.
Care not how wild the storm,
With its loud harum-scarum noise.

Care about those who genuinely care,
Use wisely your time and dime.
The only thing we ever keep is what we give away.
By giving we make our world—and there we stay.

The following gives you an idea of the base material I worked with. As I read I jotted down lines or phrases that caught my attention—like buying lumber to build a structure. Later, the lumber has to be sized and formed to fit into the shape conceived. Likewise, if I decided to use a line, I might have modified it — adding, removing, or adjusting words as needed. I often made up new lines to support or bridge a gap for the lines I used. Some lines never made the cut. What follows are lines from Poems That Touch The Heart, first compiled by A. L. Alexander, that caught my eye but did not find their way into the previous poems. Please use them for your own creations if you like.

Extra Lines Not Used

For the wrongs that need resistance
The foot may fail, the soul may faint.
And the distance between us grows and grows.
Pockets bulging out fat
The joy of air, and sea, and earth;
Boldly sever truth from fiction,
No man ever finds Tomorrow.
What silences we keep, year after year
Afterword, regret it when too late
When you feel like saying something that you know you will regret,
Where is despair, hope.
To cross the river until I reach it
The life that is worth the honor on earth is the one that resists desire.
Strength and fortitude
Strength to rise above defeat.

This is a poem I wrote to my wife. It was the time in life when things get crazy. You get older and fatter. You're not having as much fun anymore. You have a house payment, car payments, loans, bills. You really would like to say, "Take this job and shove it" but you need to pay off your obligations. You're not only trapped by bills, but by marriage, children, aging parents who now need you, social convention, and the daily grind. Everything is coming down on your head, there is no way to escape except put a gun to your head or take the gun to work. You would like to, but that's the coward's way out and you have seen what such actions have done to other families: Parents devastated, children's hearts broken, neighbors in shock, grieving friends and family. You are not that selfish or thoughtless so you trudge through the muck and the mire with no seeming end in sight. What a test of endurance and strength! At such times, if you have chosen well, your spouse can help you get through such crazy times, even when you both are struggling and stumbling. She tells you, "Come-on this isn't going to last forever."

Be True My Love by Garret Passmore

Build me up when I'm down because sometimes I feel laughed at
More than a clown
Endure impatience with patience when life seems to pass me by
Yet too weak to keep the pace – Frustration and despair are seen in my face
Take the second to command
Lead with strength when I'm weak, even when you have to turn the other cheek
Rational is what's needed when I am irrational and blind to what's needed
Overlook all my weaknesses even if your patience seems like meekness
Understand when I say what I don't mean; I feel panicked and lost when I'm mean
Voice your guidance again with gentle kindness
Endure even when, like a wolf caught in a trap, it lashes out at the hand that feeds
Encourage me when I'm weak, to find the better path I seek.

This poem called ***Brothers*** was written by my oldest son for a school assignment. On the opening page he writes, "PRETTY POETRY PROJECT (By the way that's an Alliteration) LIFE'S ADVENTURE IN POETRY (And that is a comparison)" In this assignment he looked at four poems written by Hamlin Garland, J. R. R. Tolkien, Edwin Markham, and Robert Frost and then did an analysis of each one. Then he wrote four poems of his own: a metaphor poem, an imagery poem, a poem about his sport of choice, and a poem about his brothers. The boys often wrestled and practiced on each other. They were always inseparable and always looked out for each other. This poem brings those days right back.

Brothers by Jacob Passmore

Brothers are creatures of interesting sorts,
They hide in their beds, they fart and they snort.
They come out at night with such silent delight,
To sneak to the fridge with tiptoeing might.

Together, you see, we often wail, weep, and fight,
But we always take in each other "delight."
In our combat training we form solid bonds,
That are so very, very strong.

Like a thousand sword army,
That's what we're like!
When we're together,
We love with all our might.

Brothers are creatures of interesting report.
They are fragile and vicious like gorillas of sorts.
But you know, they do what they can,
And together we'll grow and be a man.

I told my kids, “ONLY chocolate is worth rotting out your teeth for.” I love chocolate, but I wouldn’t rush into a burning building to save it, proving once-and-for-all that love is not love. There are loves of all kinds and in all varieties and intensities. Love can range from sweet to bitter, like chocolate itself, or like an onion — it adds flavor to your life but can also make you cry. This poem is based on love poems I found in several chocolate bar wrappers.

Chocolate Wrappers of Love by Garret Passmore

Cupid’s arrows feel more at home in me than in their quiver.
If I have not your love, I love nothing.
I prize your love more than gold,
More than all the riches of the Earth.

By day and by night I long for thee, no matter the year.
With you days are joyous, and my path is flowers.
I have always been in love with you I swear:
My soul has no bounds, it loves even after death.

Heart of this heartless world,
Dear heart, my thoughts are of you.
You are my loving shelter and my hearth’s fire;
My bread upon my table, you nourish me.

My love, you are the morning to my pillow.
You are the meaning to my journey.
You are the beautiful, moon white.
You are the reason I cling to life.

Like an onion: A moon wrapped in brown paper.
Love will blind you with tears,
Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips,
Its platinum loops shrink to a wedding ring,
Its scent stays with you all your life.

The following poem was written by my first cousin once removed, who shared my love of writing. She died far too young, having lived much of her life with health problems. This poem was read at her funeral. What strikes me as remarkable is that it reads like what most people call a near death experience — as though she may have written from that place.

Dreamland by Sadie Carbutt

Last night as I lay upon my pillow
Tired and defiant of sleep,
A vision, so real and consoling
'Twas far, far out of the deep.
I was riding it seemed, climbing upward,
I just seemed to float all along,
And the way was bright and sunny
And I was humming a song.

I drifted up o'er the cloud tops,
All fleecy and edged in gold,
And small clouds that looked like cotton
Or, a Shepherd gathering His fold.
I floated up over a rainbow
Of colors of beauteous sheen,
And in passing, I put my hand outward
And touched the gossamer green.

I kept going up and upward
'Til I came to a ladder to climb.
It was golden and rose-covered
With many and many a vine.
I climbed to the top of the stairway
And there was a golden gate,
I wondered if I had a mission
And opined I might be late.

The gate on its hinges swung open
And I tried to look back to the land,
But an Angel closed it softly
And Jesus took hold of my hand.
His face was so lovely and sweet
It told of the sorrows He'd worn
His brow was so white and tender
And I saw the prints of the thorn.

His robes were white and celestial
And across one shoulder, a band
And I tried to chase a teardrop,
But Jesus was holding my hand.
We walked through the beautiful gardens,

Their flowers in colors and green,
Then we came to the banks of a river
With water of silvery sheen.

We stood on the banks of the river
And walked in the warm crystal sand
And the birds and the flowers were looking
At Jesus still holding my hand.
We went on into that City
All golden—what a beautiful thing!
We went to a place all pearly
And Angels started to sing.

We went to the “Palace of Wisdom”
And it was built of Love
And over the top in bright letters,
This is “God’s Mansion Above.”
I stopped at the “Altar of Justice”
And asked for “Grace’s Gift”
And then we started onward
With Jesus still holding my hand.

I asked about the band o’er His shoulder,
It was worked in silken floss,
And He sighed as He answered:
’“Tis where I carried The Cross.”
And then I stopped to examine
The stitches—’twas thinnest of veil,
And He put one hand up to His shoulder,
And I saw the marks of the nails.

He went on and out of the city
And back to the river’s shore,
And we lingered to gather some flowers
As we hadn’t picked any before.
Then He said I should leave the flowers
In the vase at the beautiful gate,
And the Angels would watch over them,
As they were my Heavenly Fate.

I went to the golden stairway
And started to go back to the land,
I could see the beauty of Heaven
And could feel the clasp of His hand.
I sighed as to the earth I descended
And wished that our ways didn’t part,
Then with joy as my footsteps wended
I found Jesus was holding my heart.

The following are taken from ***Golden Nuggets of Thought*** by Ezra L. Marler

Marler described his collection as, “Golden Nuggets of Thought are sweet morsels and the mental vitamins that add zest to life.” He compiled these thoughts so that we might resist our baser nature. He said in his work, “Only as we learn truth and obey it do we find freedom and progress. Obedience to the laws of health frees us from distress and disease and gives us vigor and comfort of body. Obedience to the laws of physics frees us from cold, darkness, and inability by way of heat, light, and power. Obedience to the laws of learning frees us from ignorance and superstition and gives us knowledge and wisdom. Obedience to the laws of society frees us of strife and contention to give us peace and harmonious living. Obedience to the laws of God frees us from the grasp of evil opposing powers to give us joy rather than misery…Every thought, every word, every deed makes its record on the tablets of the soul. That record is an undeniable picture of what we are.” As I pored over these thoughts I noticed several sayings that were relayed to me by my mother in years past. Her grandmother repeated these over and over as she went about her days. Guideposts if you will. I am glad to pass some of these golden nuggets of thought along.

Some Golden Nuggets of Thought

I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those that care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.
I would be friend of all—the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving and forget the gift.
I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
I would look up—and laugh—and love—and lift.
—Howard Arnold Walter

I expect to pass through this world but once.
Any good work, therefore, any kindness,
Or any service I can render to any soul of man or animal,
Let me do it now!
Let me not neglect or defer it,
For I shall not pass this way again.
—Stephen Grellet, a Quaker missionary

If we reject religious instruction and authority,
Violate the rules of eternal justice,
Trifle with the injunctions of morality,
Recklessly destroy the political constitution,
No one can tell how suddenly a catastrophe may overwhelm us,
That shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity.
—Daniel Webster's last public address given in 1852 to the New York Historical Society

All those who journey soon or late,
Must pass within the garden's gate;
Must kneel alone in darkness there,
And battle with some fierce despair.
God pity those who cannot say:
"Not mine, but Thine";
Who only pray "Let this cup pass,"
And cannot see the purpose in Gethsemane.
—Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Be good; get good, and do good.
Do all the good you can,
To all the people you can,
In all the ways you can,
As often as ever you can,
As long as you can.
—Charles H. Spurgeon

I sought for the greatness and genius of America,
In her commodious harbors and her ample rivers,
And it was not there;

In her fertile fields and boundless prairies,
And it was not there;

In her rich mines and her vast world commerce,
And it was not there.

Not until I went to the churches of America
And heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness
Did I understand the secret of her genius and power.

America is great because she is good,
And if America ever ceases to be good,
America will cease to be great.
—Alexis de Tocqueville

Be fearful of little sins.
Take alarm at even an evil thought.
These are the germs of sin,
The floating seeds which drop into the heart,

And, finding in our natural corruption
A fat and favorable soil,
Spring up into actual transgressions.

These, like the rattle of the snake
And the hiss of the serpent,
Reveal the presence of danger.

The experience of all good men proves that
Sin is most easily crushed in the bud,
And that it is safer to flee from temptation
Than to fight it.
—Guthrie

I think it is natural to aggrandize the past. The truth is that the past holds as many bad times as good. It is also natural to regret when we did not make the most of the things we were given. This poem touches both of those notes. This poem was written by my mother-in-law as she reflected on the memories of her boys playing in the backyard, under, in, and on top of their big maple tree.

Five Boys in a Tree by Jeanine Nelson

Five boys playing in a tree
None aware of what will be.
Wishing to hold the joy back then
My heart aches to once again
See five boys playing in a tree.

I wrote this poem after reading Haggai in the Old Testament of the Bible. This poem talks about putting the Lord first despite our busy lives, voices, and goals that keep calling us. Haggai was likely an old man when he returned to Jerusalem after being held captive in Babylon. His name means “Festive.” This name reminds us that the Lord brings lasting joy into our lives. Much like the warning voices we hear today, Haggai was concerned with people placing spiritual life on the back burner. He reminded us that a spiritual life was a lasting value to which he urged people to give top priority.

Haggai by Garret Passmore

You plant much, but harvest little

Not enough can you eat

Obtaining drink you cannot quench your thirst

Occupation does not bring you satisfaction

Underfed and malnourished do you feel

Thermal clothing cannot keep you warm

Rewards do not come

Much is the labor of your days

Why do you not consider your ways?

In bags with holes you do put your wealth

Always looking for much you see little come

Nothing seems to come of your ways

Yet for all of your efforts, all you have blows away

Ever will you ask why?

A haiku is an unrhymed poetic form consisting of 17 syllables arranged in three lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables respectively. As you read this, forget the fact that my hair was actually more like a dark chocolate brown color as a young man. It would lighten up in the summertime as the sun bleached my hair. Keep in mind that this is poetry for which I wanted the reader to picture the colors of a fall morning before the oncoming winter making everything — and me — sleep in death. Besides, one of my girlfriends, Laura, once mistook my summer bleached hair as auburn in color.

I wanted the reader to realize that death is a preparation for a new spring and that winter makes a new birth possible. So, I began and ended with the image of winter. I also juxtaposed black and white, showing the reader that youth was blindness and experience was enlightenment. I hope someone puts my haiku on the back of my grave stone. I actually wanted my gravestone to use the last words of ***All's Quiet on the Western Front***: "His face had an expression of calm, as though almost glad the end had come." My wife forbade me, however, somehow fearing that people might think the words referred to her. I meant it as the struggles we have in this life being gone. It would apply to anyone as it did to the young man killed in 1918 in the last hours of the war. Anyway, here's the replacement:

My Haiku *by Garret Passmore*

In the winter: birth
My hair was black way back when
Then auburn, now white

When my mother's parents were married they headed from Nebraska to the West coast on a train for their honeymoon. Traveling through Northern Idaho my grandmother thought the scenery was the most beautiful she had ever seen. She was determined to live there. They left Nebraska and settled in the Ponderay Valley. Ponderay is the phonetic spelling of Pend d'Oreille. The area's name was given by French fur traders. Pend d'Oreille is a French phrase meaning "Ear hanging" referring to the local members of the Kalispel Tribe who wore shells as earrings. This next poem was written by my mother as she remembered her youth.

Leaving Ponderay Valley by Dorothy Passmore

We left the Ponderay Valley,
Where childhood was so dear,
And the waters flowed so clear.

Remember that Ponderay Valley,
Like we remembered the waves,
Of the friendly train's engineer.

It's time to leave that Ponderay Valley,
Remembering people loved so dear,
Remembering our home so clear.

How happy and contented we were then,
Where we played in the meadow and glen,
Remembering the way our life was then.

Walking to mountains along dusty roads,
Picking sweet berries together or alone,
And the waves of welcome when we returned home.

We were driving back home as my preschool granddaughter looked at the passing scenes through the car window. Seeing through the eyes of a child, she talked about what she observed. There was nothing special in the trip, only in listening to the beautiful ideas of a child. It made me wonder, “Isn’t it time to stop and wonder at the beauty that surrounds us?”

Louisa’s Poem by Garret Passmore

In a sunny peaceful pool, I wonder,
“Perhaps I might have more fun”

Look at the sun, so bright it shines!
I want to jump up to the fluffy clouds,

Sing with the birds, and
Play in the wind again and again.

My brother wrote this when he was in school as part of a writing assignment. I loved it so much I copied it down and kept it over these many years.

An Ode to Noah by Brian Passmore

The Lord seen some sinin'
And He thought it was a shame,
So, He got a bright idea:
"I think I'll make it rain."

Forty days and forty nights,
He called on Noah:
"Mend my plight."

During the day,
And during the night,
Noah worked like crazy
Rather than be lazy.

The neighbors were a laughin'
At his fifty cubits wide
When Noah was a sayin'
"The Lord is my guide."

The neighbors laughed harder
And they hit the floor;
But God got 'em back
And it started to pour.

In the ark two-by-two
The animals came
Including the ewe.

Then the people panicked,
When all they could do,
Was chop wood
Until they turned blue.

They tried to build a boat,
But it was a real pain
'Cause all it would do
Was fill up with rain.

If you listen closely,
And sit still too,
This same story
Could save you.

How does one prepare? The desert prepared Israel. There, God taught them that He was the one who protected, preserved, and provided for them while sin, disbelief, and rebellion ended in disaster. God forgives us when we wander away. He has compassion on our loneliness caused by our rebellion. God restored Israel and will always restore us to a loving relationship with Him if we so choose.

Numbers by Garret Passmore

My life is one which has been cast into the desert place
Its sun can dry up my soul and scorch my existence
Always must I gather Waters of Life to survive
Wanting lands of plenty—receiving none
Yes, even as wandering Israel cast out of Egypt
A life of the desert instead of ripe fields
The free fish, cucumbers, melon, leek, and onion no more
Love of God's way, not Egypt's, I must learn
Hatred from King Balak will I know
Knowledge of Egypt will taunt me
Enemies of the Lord will always be the way-of-the-world
In the wilderness I too, like Israel, must camp
Would that this wilderness show me the mercy of the Lord
Nazarite vows separate me for the Lord's purposes
I must vow to learn of Him, then follow Him
Prayer and study, daily will I gather
Like the Manna seed which was like fresh oil
Unless gathered daily for bread, one feels the pain of absence
Daily must I gather the words of the Lord to be filled
Regret would do little once the judgment of the Lord is past
Every day I must recall the Lord's mercy to those who love Him
I must then love God's ways and embrace them
Raising the brass symbol was for those of faith to turn and live
Follow the Lord I must, and turn from Egypt
Never must I suffer death through disobedience of The Word
Yet, if so, sin would swallow up as Dathan was by earth
Every day I must be nourished through The Word
Might all who trust, and do, be prophets who know the Lord
Seventy elders and Moses, as such, talked face-to-face with God
Even so must I be purified as an elder or perish as the rebel
Such is sunlight and sand which does wither or purify

I wrote down ideas from T. S. Eliot's book of ***Collected Poems*** and created a poem based on those notes. If you are acquainted with his works, the lines here echo his voice. It is a poem that describes where we were, where we are, and where we might be heading. Our current destination does not have to be our destiny. We have the ability to decide where we can end up. I hope we will decide to journey towards a peaceable place rather than a land of strife and division.

Collected Poems of Concern by Garret Passmore

We were once so noble in a sacred place.
Laughter once tinkled among the teacups,
While the grass sang.
We were part of the laughter and the Testimony,
Of summer nights.
What life have we if not a life together?
Home is where one starts from, the end and beginning.
We build nothing unless the Lord builds with us.
Where there is no Temple there shall be no homes.
I would meet you upon this honesty,
That neither fear nor courage saves us.
Only the Lord in the perpetual struggle of Good and Evil.
Man's destination is his own village,
His own fire, and his wife's cooking.
We no longer strive to stride towards such things.
Man's destination need not be his destiny,
Every country is a home to one and an exile to another.
Weave, weave the sunlight back into your hair,
Rather than leave,
Turning from life's light to wait for death's wind.

Mankind has fallen so,
I find words I never thought to speak,
In streets I never thought I'd see
What you thought you came for is only a shell,
Husks of meaning.
When we died there was silence in heaven,
And silence at the end of the street,
Where they buy half pints of bitter in fear and frenzy.
Streets that follow a tedious argument of insidious intent.
Yellow haze with all its nocturnal odors,
Rubs its back upon the windows,
That smells of sweat and cologne,
Rising from the streets in steam.
The city of changing lights and noise,
Where cats are maddened in the moonlight dance.

O miserable cities of designing men where rats breed,
And snakes live on moldering stairs:
In the streets of scattered brick,
Where the goats climb and weeds grow.
What is the meaning of this city?

Men in this city have left God not for other gods, they say,
But for no god; Men both deny gods,
And worship gods of Usury, Lust, and Power.
There is time to murder and cheat,
In the endless cycle of twisted idea and violent rift.
Going from wrong to wrong in a tobacco trance,
Whispering lunar incantations.
In a dull head among windy spaces,
Dodging emptiness until effort becomes dust.
Until the soul leaves the body torn and bruised,
From the pain of living and the drug of dreams.
Lost in dusty rooms of disordered papers,
On ships of moldy beams, rigging weak, canvas rotten,
Heading towards ragged rocks in restless waters

They left their souls in Syria, and the Temple,
And an unopened book.
O weariness of man who turn from God,
With broken standards, broken lives.
Men having no lasting purpose save birth, and copulation,
Eating and drinking. Dung and dying.
Nearer to death, no nearer to God.
With scheming, exploiting, dividing,
And engaging in rational morality,
They seek the applause of all but receive the love of none.
They have the knowledge of speech,
But not of silence or good taste.
Living Water and Life you may evade, but Death you shall not.
Undertakers will bury dust,
With a lipless grin and eyes devoid of tears.
Then listening for a fool's approving honor.

Of all that was done in the past, we eat fruit,
Either rotten or ripe.
I was thinking of all that it was, or could have been.
A mirage; an illusion?
Church disowned, tower overthrown, bells upturned.
What have we to do?
We stand with empty hands and palms,
Upward turned in an age which advances,
Progressively backwards?
The beginning reminds us of the end.

Our end, the beginning.
We must return from whence we came.
Let the forces of the morning quake.
Let us make perfect our will.
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires.
World of spring and autumn, birth and rebirth,
Beauty and Beauty!
The world turns and the world changes.
If men do not build how shall they live?
Where you are is where are you are not,
At any time or at any season.
Never and always.

This poem was written by one of my parent's friends, Joe Hiatt. The poem deals with the sand hills located in Joe's home state of Nebraska. These sand hills are massive occupying a quarter of the entire state.

Sand Hills of Nebraska by Joe Hiatt

If you ever rid in the Sand Hill,
In Western Nebraska land,
Ya'd shore know the feeling of lonely,
And I'll tell ya, it shore ain't that grand.

The wind is always blowin'.
There ain't nothing to slow it down,
Cept a three-wire fence in Dakota,
And ya can't even find a good town.

In the winter the cold is ferocious,
With snow pilin' up in the draws.
Now the coyotes are huntin' for shelter,
Where they can warm up their paws.

Using the words from the plays of Shakespeare I have written a story of love desired and love failed with its resultant action. The poem is called ***Lux tua vita mihi***, or translated, "Thy light is life for me." Most people should be able to recognize many of the famous lines. For those who may have seriously studied Shakespeare everything here might sound familiar.

Lux tua vita mihi by Garret Passmore

It is said that they do not love who do not speak their love. I have words to speak in thine ear. Let me therefore have audience for a word or two. And then let your fair eyes and gentle wishes go with me.

O precious creature, I have loved you ever since I saw you, and still I see you beautiful. I saw coral lips to move, and with breath you did perfume the air. Thou art sacred and sweet. My awe softly spoken: "A winged messenger of heaven! Or, if not, an earthly jewel! Behold divineness." I saw you a shop of all the qualities that man loves woman for. Your shop's pleasures court mine eyes. Your face is the book of praises, where is read nothing but curious wonder. I could not bid my heart "Be mute and dumb," or look upon this love with idle sight. With my eyes, you are the sweetest lady that ever I looked on. Thou art the sweetest flower of all the field. Summer hath not such a flower as you. Thou art the object and the pleasure of mine eye; the dearest morsel of the earth. You surpass heaven in my mouth. You are looked for and called for, asked for and sought for. What light is light, if you be not seen? With time you make a July's day short as December.

I love thee: I have spoken it. Ask me no reason why I love you. Love's reason is without reason. Neither rhyme nor reason can express how much I am in love. Though Love may use Reason for his rule maker, he admits him not for his counselor. Thy thoughts I cleave to without reason. Lovers and madmen have such seething brains, such shaping fantasies, that apprehend more than cool reason ever comprehends. If thou didst know how many fathoms deep I am in love! The depth of my love cannot be sounded. Love so deep that reason is drowned. The reason why those mad with love are not so punished and cured is that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love too. What is my will then? That you have yours, for mine is gone. I would have you should I die the hour after. I do confess the vices of my blood—my lusty heart. I eat nothing but that which breeds hot blood, and hot blood begets hot thoughts, and hot thoughts beget hot deeds, and hot deeds is love. Does this make me false? Could you trust that I would receive your offered love like love and would not wrong it? What is it to be false? To lie in bed and think of you? To weep as the clocks tic on? To break sleep with a fearful dream of you, and to cry myself awake? This love has turned me wrong side out. I have found you like a jewel, mine own, and not mine own. In agony I ask: "What angel would bless this unworthy faithless husband?" Yet, my vow is earthly, but thou art a heavenly love. Vows are but breath, and breath a vapor is. It is known some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall. Perdition catch my soul but I do love thee! And when I love thee not, chaos is come again. I do love nothing in the world so well as you—is not that strange? Doubt that the stars are fire, doubt the sun doth move, doubt truth to be a liar, but never doubt I love. I love thee best, O most best, believe it.

Who will not change a raven for a dove? Come then, here is my heart. Lady, will you walk about with your friend? Lady, give me your hand, and, as we walk, to our own selves bend we our needful talk. Come; give me a taste of your quality. Come, a passionate speech. Feast here a while, until our stars that frown lend us a smile. Come, sit by my side and let the world slip, we shall never be younger. O come, be buried within these arms. My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time, and makes as healthful music. Let me, my service, tender upon your lips that I may melt. Let us meet so near with our lips that our breaths embrace together. When these mutualities so marshal the way, hard at hand comes the master and the main exercise, the incorporate conclusion. What then is your pleasure? For I come to answer thy best pleasure. I am nothing, but to please your fantasy. Our bodies are gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners. I desire access to you. I beg to toil in your delight. I dedicate myself to your sweet pleasure. Now, at the latest minute of the hour, grant me your love. Consent…that we may enjoy each other. Lay down the treasures of your body. I want to taste your sweet body and kiss the instrument of your pleasure. Let wantons light of heart, tickle the senseless rushes with their heels. Now let me break my fast, dine, sup, and sleep upon the very naked name of Love. Lay thy leg over my thigh, and sigh, and kiss, and then cry "Cursed fate!" Feel the wanton strings and motions of the sense. Let me give you sensible warm motion and a delighted spirit. Let us roll in the rank sweat of a greasy bed, honeying and making love. Kill me tomorrow, so long as you let me live tonight.

Well, or ill, I am bound to you. My love is like a fair house built on another man's ground, so that I have lost my edifice by mistaking the place where I erected it. Go to your bosom, knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know. Then come, bid me do anything for thee remembering how I love thy company. Swear by thy sacred self, which is the god of my idolatry, and I will believe thee. No? Where is my wit? I know not what I speak. I am no pilot, yet were thou as far as that vast shore washed by the farthest sea. I would that my heart were in your body. You make my body pine and soul to languish. Here stand I, lady; dart thy skill at me; bruise me with scorn, confound me with a flout; thrust thy sharp wit quire through my ignorance; cut me to pieces with thy keen conceit. What worser place can I beg in your love—and yet a place of high respect with me—than to be used as you use a dog. I am your spaniel. The more you beat me, I will fawn on you. Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me, neglect me, lose me; only give me leave, unworthy as I am, to follow you. I know I love in vain, strive against hope; yet in this picky and unusable mesh I still pour in the waters of my love and lack not to lose still. I bear the pangs of rejected love. Alas, what ignorant sin I have committed.

Heaven knows how I love you, and you shall one day find it. Shall we part then? Parting is such sweet sorrow. And with your parting I have lost myself, I am not here. Under love's heavy burden do I sink—I am a martyr slain in Cupid's wars. I am sick, heart sick. All fancy-sick I am, and pale of cheer with sighs of love, that cross the fresh blood dear. There is no living, none, if you be away. I am so out of love with life without you. My life is better ended now than death prolonged, wanting of thy love. Let love's devouring death do what he dare for I fear it not. Bye sweet jewel, for I go where no man can return and where no man can love.

This poem was written by one of my ancestors. I like this poem because it reminds me that life is meant to have good and bad days. They all seem to come of their own accord. If I am having a rough go I just remember that good is coming. When it is dark and cold I know warmer brighter days are on their way. All I really have to do is wait for them.

Shining Through by John Fagan

Life is quite a mixture of sunshine and rain,
Teardrops and laughter,
Some pleasure, some pain.

We can't have all bright days.

But it's certainly true
That there never was a cloud
The sun didn't shine through.

I took down notes from ***Six Centuries of Great Poetry: From Chaucer to Yeats*** compiled by Warren and Erskine and created inspired works from their many words that I'm sharing with you. If you are familiar with some of these works you might be able to recognize some lines in the following poems.

This first one is a song sung by a drunkard of the eighteenth century. He is forced to leave the old tavern when he gets drunk enough that the barkeep refuses to serve him. As he staggers down the street he sings a beautiful song he made up. He is of course out of key and obnoxiously loud. He thinks the chorus repeats itself but it never does. His singing induces complaints from others — not from his singing, he thinks, but from other sources.

A Drunkard Song by Garret Passmore

Whiskey rye in me eye
Brings me tears of revelry,
While I sing, “Hey rye-tee—doe-eye-is my-a-tee.”

Me acres of jugged rye,
Drunk with a fly singing,
“Hay, and a hoe, and knee-nigh-no.”

My eyes don’t cry,
With me drunken lullaby
Singing, “Coo, rye-wee, a-two-witta-rye!”

He damns the climate and complains of spleen
Damns me staggering in the middle of the stream,
Where the cawdy-mawdy fly sings with me, “Hey-ho, ladie-O. Drink a bottle of rye.”

It is said that you can't really live until you realize that your life will come to an end. Then what? There are stories of people that have experienced death and then came back to tell the tale. You may have doubts about what they say, but you cannot doubt that everyone dies. This thought ought to cause us to reflect upon our lives and where it is going. No matter how sure you are you can never be absolutely sure because you haven't experienced it yet. The following is one person's realization of their own mortality.

Today I Knew I was Dead by Garret Passmore

I awoke from restless sleep thinking,
"I am but dust, and die I must."
Yet alive, and yet "Farewell"
Woe to me, unhappy man.

My tale was told and yet it was not heard.
Enraged I write I know not what; death comes quick, I know not how.
Like waves on pebbled shore, so my minutes hasten to the end.
The foam of gasping white, the spray of the beating surf.

Mortality, behold in fear!
All good things vanish,
Peace, plenty, pleasure, suddenly decay.
Youth spent, wrinkles devour, declination, decay.

Why so large cost, having so short a lease?
Life but a flower to wither on the vine?
What a change of flesh is here!
This spring entombed, now autumn here, soon winter binds.

The flight is past; a life forgotten.
Rivers rage, and rocks grow cold while,
The grave blinds me from searching sun.
The curtains drawn, the play is done.

I ruminate in eternal ruin of,
This vile world, which vilest worms dwell,
Worms which feed on Hector brave with,
Roses dead on graves of rotting brown.

As those I love decay, I die in part,
String after string is severed from heart,
Until the song of life is gone: Silent, pale.
Murmuring breath, the creep of death.

Fly envious time, till thou run out thy race.
Ah, Fear! Ah, fantastic Fear! I see, I see thee near.
I know thy hurried steps, thy haggard eye!
The gathering winds, the darkness soon! Bye sweet lullaby.

Love never leaves us unscathed. It takes us to places and causes us to do things that we would never normally do. It can make us crazy but the allure is too great to resist. Love is deeper and more powerful than reason. Here is one person's struggle with love's allure and its aftermath.

The Love of a Fool by Garret Passmore

When I first came here I had hope,
Hope for I knew not what.
Then I fell upon the thorns of life! I bled!
"Fool," said my Muse to me, "Look in Thy heart and write."

Farewell, love: thy baited hook shall tangle me no more.
I loathe that I did love, in youth that I thought sweet.
To bait her eyes, to lead her with my fairest words,
And cherries and berries, red as any lover’s blood.

There, in a meadow, by the river’s side,
A flock of nymphs I chance to espy,
All lovely daughters of the flood nearby.
Love's strange sensations, old wonder born anew.

Sweeter than swelling grape of ripest wine,
Softer than feathers of the fairest dove,
Smoother than sweat, more stately than pine
Singing softly, “Place thy feet naked in water divine.”

Cupid, I hate thee, which I'd have thee know.
You a honey tongue with a heart of gall.
She with speeches fair, she wooed the gentle air,
That she might take old pleasures in my new pain.

We tend to only experience those things which we can see, taste, smell, hear, and touch. These, in turn, have a strong pull on what we do. I tend to view anything beyond these common senses as imagination, yet I cannot dismiss what I cannot fully understand. There is a realm beyond what we can perceive with our five senses. There are things which extend beyond our understanding. We are limited. Some people possess a sixth sense. They understand things beyond what our five senses can provide. Some refer to this sixth sense as having faith or being a seer: A perceiver of hidden truths. A sixth sense is a rare sense misunderstood by the majority who only have fewer than five senses. It's easy to understand those with fewer than five senses. We have the capability of imagining what it would be like if we couldn't hear, for example. What we cannot understand are those who have a sense beyond the common five senses. We cannot understand what we do not have. We can only understand what it would be like to lose what we do have. Here is an address to those with the common five senses and to those with a sixth sense.

An Address to Sinners and Saints by Garret Passmore

To some, Light and Truth give offense.
They hate the proper prophet and sneer at the seer,
On whose truths the Saints do rest.
A living worm lies gnawing in a doubter's breast.

God blasphemed and doubted in schools of Greece and Rome.
Their stately walls: a prison, their indoctrination: a tomb.
They shut the gates of mercy on mankind.
They choose to be willfully blind.

Though mysteries are barred from their eyes,
The divine alone, with warrant, pries,
Where the truth in private lies,
I see and love what others do despise.

Black clouds, and fire, and hell will burst: oh, hear children of the earth!
I saw Eternity, a great Ring of pure and endless light, all calm, as it was bright.
His purposes ripening fast; the bud is bitter, but sweet the flower will last.
Ye fearful saints fresh courage take, be strong and do not break.

Hark, the little vesper bell which bids benediction at the Samaritan's well!
I am a part of all that I have met within sacred walls.
Nothing single; all divine. We meet in spirit, my heart to thine.
We implore God's Eternal Love, "Maintain thy life in ours!"

We buy terms divine in selling hours of dross,
Imploring the passing tribute of a sigh, it is only a moment we cry.
Heavens blessings without number gently fall upon our heads.
In trailing clouds of glory we return to God, our rest.

Life is hard. And if the truth be known, I don't believe it was meant to be easy. Those things which are of the most value are the hardest things to get. We do not value that which comes easy to us. An easy life is a meaningless life. Easy knowledge is not as valuable as knowledge we had to work years to obtain. We often desire wealth, knowledge, skills, and abilities that are easy to obtain. But the truth is, if we had that desire come true, all would be worthless. The thing to realize here is that our difficult life, as hard as it might be, makes living worthwhile. We all have times when we are in great despair over the circumstances we find ourselves in. But in reality, these disasters are blessings when contrasted with the things that are joyous in our life. Contrasts in our lives help us to understand life. We understand darkness best when compared to light. We understand good times best when compared to bad times. We need these contrasts for our learning and understanding in valuing life. A common difficulty in the human experience is despair. Here is a poem based on this common feeling.

Despair by Garret Passmore

'Tween rock and rock in a rain of tears, a cloud of dark disdain appears.
Never tasting but sour, always betrayed, thus my lot day to day.
Undergoing torturing pain, where stubborn Stoics would complain.

Garden gathers green, but her flowers I've never seen.
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
With empty eyeballs unfocused yet stuck.

Always roaming with a hungry heart: lost.
Trampled and tossed, soaking sweat and blood it cost.
Cold in the blazing sun, starved at the feast, downhill I run,

Fleeing a devil in my heart, far worse than death to me,
I hear the wind's infinite wail while I crawl through endless travail.
Crying on the frightened air, making everything afraid; I pale!

Hearing the winds cry to the waters—Monotone.
I hear the noise of many waters as it goes.
I fear the fall below, yet here I go!

One of the most disturbing attributes of human behavior is the desire to have power over other people's lives. Most commonly, we call these types of people "politicians." They are people who campaign to be put in charge of what others do. And in doing so, they often make those they are over worse off. I wish we would be responsible enough to not need politicians. I wish we were responsible enough not to need laws. But the truth of the matter is that many people are both irresponsible and incompetent in self governance. This is a sad state of affairs in our world. Because all people are inherently selfish, they take advantage of the position they find themselves in. All people, including politicians, are inherently corrupt because of self-interest. Until the human race can learn to put others above themselves we will always have the problem of corruption.

Political Career Corruption by Garret Passmore

In folly ripe, in reason rotten
Their purpose: ambition, Their practice: hate
Their charity: coldness, Their mirth: the music of division
Their mantra: "Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!"

The brambles like tall cedars grow,
Mole-hills seem mountains, and
The ant appears a monstrous elephant.
They exaggerate with sinful blame.

Tell the finality of political blindness
Tell its friendship of unkindness
Getting and spending, they lay waste,
This still, sad music of humanity's case.

To war and arms they fly.
Then cry, "Faith in the sword, horse, and shield."
Yet, there is no armor against fate.
Gods are they, yet as men they'll die.

Born of cankered hate, or rankest villainy.
The triple tyrant: blind, destroying nature, and mankind.
So much abhorred worm, can honor destroy;
Burn worlds; devour man.

Before this strange disease of modern life,
No graven image worshiped save currency and political strife.
The hardest knife ill-used doth lose its edge as exampled here,
In caves of hell, in shadows of malevolence, in this infernal life.

In reflecting on her life, as she was making a quilt, my mother wrote the following:

The Quilt of My Life by Dorothy Passmore

For the quilt I diligently sew,
Let me take from the scrap-bag of my life:
The pinks and calicos of a little girl's dress;

The red and blues checkered gingham of a little boy's shirt;
The satin of a baby's quilt;
The lace from a wedding gown.

Stitch them together with memories,
All the happiness and tears.
Out of all the pieces a whole complete pattern appears.

To me this is a very important poem because I couldn't write it until some more of my history happened. I had the concept for this poem for about two years but didn't have the words for it. Then life's story happened with all its ups and downs. I stumbled upon this poem again and suddenly the words were there. Sometimes we just have to put things down before we have the strength to pick them up.

The Song of Solomon by Garret Passmore

Passion of the mind and soul can burn and destroy like fire
Gains of the flesh are so brief and fleeting
And will I decide that the cost has value?
Oh, thou fairest among women
She seems my inevitable fate
Desire towards her is great
She is ravishing my heart
Be a song to that heart now!
I seek your love more than Gold
Undaunted I must have you
Our love shall be as strong as death and as hot as coals
I want my left hand behind your head, my right embracing you
Neck with a chain of gold I will kiss
Lust is the fruit sweet to my taste
Do your lips taste better than fine wine?
Does your body compare to the savor of spices?
Ever will you delight me?
Say you will, my dove, and speak words as sweet as honeycomb
Set me as a seal upon your heart
Love me with passion that cannot be quenched with many waters
Thoughts of something more gently guide me
I remember former Love
Realms of a God unseen, but gently felt
Very soon I must choose which path to take
Oh, that I may follow the Lasting Path
Ever may thine Grace abound
You have been faithful and kind to me always
Shall I then decide to stray?
Stay with Thee I must

When my father died of cancer in 2005 my mother missed him so. Years later she wrote this as she remembered him.

Thinking of You by Dorothy Passmore

But, today you are gone
When the crocus and the hyacinths bloom in the spring
I think of you
When the roses burst forth in the summer
I think of you
Through the summer's growing greenery
I think of you
When the corn is ripe, and harvest is here
I think of you
Now that you are gone
I think of you
Until we meet in the eternities
I will think of you.

I took down notes from Walt Whitman's ***Leaves of Grass*** and created one poem from his many words. The poem I compiled is about our civilization and how we should change. If you are familiar with Walt Whitman's works you should be able to recognize his copied style here.

Leaves of Grass by Garret Passmore

The Poem
Unheard by the sharpest ear, unformed in the clearest eyes.
The words here are nothing, nothing, nothing.
The drift of it, everything!
Let the preacher preach, the lawyer advocate, the judge expound, and let me write!
Write I shall! The diverse! The compact!
Let them who are without my poem go wanting.

City Rats
They gather together in just one corner.
Gossip's flame, clack of sticks, sounds running together, combined, fused or following,
Sounds of the city in the day, and night in the tinkles of colored light.
Old cautious hucksters, treacherous lip-smiles, the stupid and crazy.
House of madness in sin, crumpled, crushed, each for each.
Here are the brawling and dins, the divisions, jealousies, recriminations on every side.
Faces and faces and faces of people of slack faith.
The devilish and the dark crawling things in slime and mud, poison the barren soil,
The evil men, the slag and hideous rot, full of the foul excrement of maggots.

A Nation
Once powerful with majestic men, toilers, sailors and soldiers, great women, helpers of children, are now reduced, withdrawn, and desolate.
Only fanged glittering is left.
The Only Son is dead, dead, dead with the songs of insurrection.
Words of the inhabitants are weapons full of death, bathed in rebellion's perfume.
They search for war, red war.
The wounded are not healed, the walking are dead.
Freedom: poisoned by Toleration, swayed by Law,
Masses follow leaders who do NOT believe in salvation.
They believe in violence, poverty, anger, division.
Death under the breast-bones, Hell under the skull-bones.
Hear the sobbing of the church bells.
Listen America, son or daughter: Can I love what hates?
With the key of softness, loose the locks.

Rise
From a coffined death.
Sad, O’ so sad, are the dead with their silent eyes.
A wafted autumn leaf, dropped in the closing grave, the shoveled earth,
The wailing words then silence for the utterly lost.
O’ Helpless vapor in your buying, selling, eating, drinking, suffering,
O’ beautiful lost soul, always dying in your living,
As if **a** little child who peeked in at the door, and then drew back,
Now old, you have lived without purpose, and feel it with bitterness worse than gall.
The clock indicates the moment—but what does eternity indicate?
O’ bafflers of graves, I will show that nothing is more beautiful than death.
Faithful and friendly are the arms that help each who passes.

The Soul
Forever and forever—longer than soil is brown and solid—longer than water flows.
O’ struggling soul of man, If no scholar were to ever see your name in print,
Are you any less than endless? Are you any less beautiful with an ugly face?
I sing the body electric, not of something made of wood and stone.
Each of us is inevitable and limitless,
Each of us here as divinely as any is here.
The poems of the body are of the soul,
Wisdom is not found in schools, but the soul.
Souls take us on the grand roads of the universe.
Lo, soul, seest thou not God's purpose?

Worship!
I say that the real permanent grandeur of these States must be their religion,
Otherwise there is just no real and permanent grandeur;
There is no character of life without religion.
Walking the old hills of Judea with the beautiful and gentle God by my side,
I understand the large hearts of heroes, courage, and the calmness of martyrs.
In the Divine Christ I become a positive knower that can see you as sacred, dearly loved,
A comrade, a friend, smooth, and tolerant.
Philosophies may prove well in the lecture rooms,
Yet NOT under spacious clouds.
Therefore, contend for your soul’s life.
Beware of moral ripening.
Beware what precedes the decay.

I Am
Old and young, foolish as much as wise,
A novice with the simplest, a teacher among the learned.
Have you seen a fool corrupt their body?
My face droops as I resign myself. Oh my body!
Shall I whine about my condition while weeping over my sins?
Long, long I muse: Nothing endures but my personal qualities.
I am the same as are you: In midnight sleep I dream, I dream, I dream.
I too lived, I too walked, I too felt the curious abrupt questioning stir within me,
I had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak, was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow,
Sly, mean, lazy, but, when I gave, I gave of myself.
Many the hardship, few the joys, yet I am content.
I am redeemed of sins past and yet to come.

Grass!
What is grass?
I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey work of the stars.
Grass is what grows from within.
It grows in the calm of the mounting sun in unspoiled fields.
This is the grass that grows where the Living Water is.
The Poem of the Earth is the voice of the rain.
The rain making *the air* delicious and clear,
The air carrying gracefully sailing seeds, to drop where they may.
To breathe the air, how delicious!
Remembering the convolutions of this globe,
I think it would be better to live with growing grass.
I stand and look long and long.
The sky, the distance, the trees, the green grass.
We are growth, deeper green.
Let me glide noiselessly forth.
Give me green blades of grass and warbling birds.
Give me the splendid silent Son with all His beams full-dazzling.
Give me nights perfectly quiet.
Let my heart be at rest.

This poem describes what Jeremiah saw and felt when Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Babylonians in 587 BC as described in the Book of Lamentations. This poem reminds us not to be complacent in what we do, say, and think. Those actions, words, and thoughts influence the direction we are headed.

What Sin Doth Bring by Garret Passmore

Once a sea of people, Jerusalem lies deserted.
How the mighty are fallen.

Celebrations are now turned into mourning.
Women cry over their starving children.

This is what sin doth bring.

Jerusalem's beauty is broken up.
Her splendor is but a faded memory.

Passersby recoil in horror.
A filthy rag in place of her once silken gown.

This is what sin doth bring.

Jerusalem's sins were woven into ropes.
Those who departed are hitched to the yoke of captivity.

Plump grapes of prosperity crushed.
The wine of wrath made by the adversary's feet.

This is what sin doth bring.

Sins brought me comfortless weeping.
In no future do I hope—

Only a sick heart from what sin doth bring.

This poem was written by my wife as a small child. She was only six years old at the time and she shows the cuteness and innocence of a young child in this poem.

Little Miss Cutie by Wynette Nelson

It is always different,
Because I love you

And

Because it's new,
It's always going to be,

Beautiful.

On May 31, 1984, I was working for First Street Plumbing in Idaho Falls. While driving the company pick-up truck I made this poem up.

Today I Love Life by Garret Passmore

I love life in so many ways.
I love to see the children at their cheerful play;
I love the green of grass below and the trees that grow so slow;
I love the blues and the whites of the sky so high.
I love the mountains that seem so nigh;
I love the feeling of strength from soreness and sweat;
I love the challenges of thin air and the high and jagged crest.
I love the cool and crystal clear nights and the bright hot sun filled days.
I love the smells of the wild Mountain flower,
And I love all of nature's power.
I love the solitude in the heights of the mountain,
Or the wide and wild open desert.
I love the bright days.
I love life in so many ways.

I wrote this poem after one of my girlfriends dumped me for another guy. To me, this poem sounds like I listened to a break-up song and wrote it down. At that time, so many years ago, I may have listened to a song that I commiserated with and then wrote what I remembered about it, but I gave no credit to it. So I am guessing it was mine.

Change is a Comin' by Garret Passmore

I'm trying hard to see.
I was trying to be the real me.
Now I'm all alone.
Nothing here except a silent phone.

Suddenly I'm mad.
My guns are loaded,
My blood is hot,
I shout, "What a snot!"

I can feel that change,
Comin' on,
On so strong.
Oh the regret of, "So long!"

By reason of insanity,
Things don't look real to me.
Oh, why did you come into my life?
I seem so senseless as I draw my knife.

It's a rainy Monday morning.
No! It's raining all the time.
I am haunted by our past,
I'm haunted that our good times didn't last.

If I knew what I know now,
Past, you would not laugh at me.
I wouldn't have even talked to you with,
Your broken promises, your little schemes.

I had a dream last night,
I buckled over, I was distraught,
Knowing what I went for,
Yet, I could not.

I turn on some rowdy music, to forget my silly life.
But I feel it, I can feel a change, comin' on,
I can feel it, it's comin' on so strong.
On the 'marrow I'll say to old times, "So long!"

I'm glad I found this poem in a stack of loose papers. I wrote it for my wife to remind her that she is my everything. I probably could've been better at everything but I wasn't. One of my regrets is that I wasn't a better husband. But I hope that she knows that I love her with all my heart and I would do anything for her. I think she does, but here it is anyway.

Forever be Mine by Garret Passmore

Because of you,
Forever I am changed.
Every day is beautiful.
Oh, when I hear your voice,
Music do I hear.
Reaching for you,
I find I am captured by your touch.
Each beat of your heart leads me to you.
No magic of a dream that comes true is like your
Voice; the music of your love.
Each day you care for me.
Every day touched by your hand,
Reassures me of love's sweet dream.

I wrote this poem after hearing a talk given in church by a neighbor lady. I feel this poem reflects the essence of what she said. After hearing her speak I felt her words were important to preserve.

I See the Hand of God by Garret Passmore

God's blessings surround me.
He is in the shade tree during a long hot walk.
He is in the sweetness of fresh garden vegetables.
He is in the smell of fresh cut grass.
He is in the hug of a grandchild;
Their smile as well.

His love surrounds me in every little way:
The glowing sunrise; the peaceful sunset.
Day-in and day-out He sees me through.
He is with me in each little way.
And, because of Him,
Hope is renewed with the dawning day.

I hope you have enjoyed examining these poems and prose.

Poetry is meant to cause us to reflect and think about some aspect of life's sojourn. One type of poetry I consider can be found in many songs. Songs, like poems, create a sense of rhythm and convey some sort of message. Many songs often use poetic methods such as rhyme and symbolism. The major difference is that songs combine the advantages of wordplay with music while unaccompanied poems better equip the readers to create their own interpretation of events.

One song that stands out to me is a type of scriptural poem and is called "***The Wedding Song [There is Love]***." I like the James Last version the best. In listening to the song I saw symbolic meaning beyond the words; an echo of the scriptures which I'm sharing with you now. I have left out some of the insignificant "La-La-La" type wording that doesn't add any additional meaning to the song. The original words of the song are in the darker, bigger print while how I interpreted the song is in the lighter smaller font.

The Wedding Song [There is Love]

He is now to be among you at the calling of your hearts.
Rest assured this troubadour *(A troubadour is a lyrical poet who composes songs in a romantic language about noble love)* **is acting on His part.** *(This is a phrase implying responsibility or involvement. The meaning for me here is that God is involved in our lives.*)

The union of your spirits here, has caused Him (Jesus) **to remain,**
For whenever two or more of you are gathered in His name (*Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them."*)
There is Love (*1 John 4:7 "Let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God"*)

A man shall leave his mother and a woman leave her home.
They shall travel on to where the two shall be as one (Genesis 2:24 "That's why a man will leave his own father and mother. He marries a woman, and the two of them become like one person.")

As it was in the beginning (*Matthew 19:4, "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'"*) **is now and until the end.**
Woman draws her life from man and gives it back again *(The man provides for his wife while his wife bares and nurtures offspring.)*
And there is Love
There is Love *(To treasure, to be devoted, to have tenderness, to be respectful towards, and to adore are some ways one may describe love.)*

Then what is the reason for becoming man and wife? *(Ephesians 5:31 "For this reason a man is to leave his father and his mother and be united to his wife, and the two shall be as one.")*

Is it love that brings you here or Love that brings you life? *(The meaning of life eludes us until we learn to love. Love brings us to our celestial home.)*

For if loving is the answer, then who's the giving for? *(One definition for "giving" is, "the active softening, breaking, or yielding." Another definition is, "To put into the possession of another for their use." While studying this I wondered, "Could it be that when we give we are giving to ourselves?")*

Do you believe in something that you've never seen before? *(I have never seen love as an object. I have only experienced love as an action. Love is something that we can't lay our fingers on and store in a jar. But when we give it away we feel it. I know love is there even when my eyes can't see its shadow.)*

Oh there is Love
There is Love

As you listen to songs and as you read the ideas of others it is my hope that you will pay attention and try to pick out the lessons these are trying to teach. It is also important to understand which direction they are taking you. Make sure it is the direction you wish to go. May you find poetry in your life. Every day is a chance to observe and to learn. Sometimes we are fortunate enough to put down in words what we both see and come to understand. Here is my wish: "May you find something wonderful to read. May you find something wonderful to write."